

Senate Bill 43
January 11, 2010
Presented by Charles Van Genderen
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Charles Van Genderen, Montana State Parks Administrator of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here in support of Senate Bill 43.

The theory behind establishing primitive parks was to not pay fees in certain state parks back when the division had a day use fee. Some of the parks, however, are not meeting public demand for service or helping generate revenue for the park system. For example, some parks provide camping with all the required O&M but fees cannot help offset the cost. This is challenging citizens and staff, while concerning adjacent landowners.

The law needs to be amended and updated. There are sites in the law that are no longer state parks, such as Deadman's Basin and Natural Bridge. There are parks such as Headwaters and Thompson Falls that are not at all primitive. There are parks that need to be removed from the law so the parks can be improved, such as Painted Rocks and Ackley Lake.

There are also some changes to the law that are needed so that the division can keep the parks as primitive but address visitor service, landowner concerns, and improve management. We need the ability to expand the law so that boat docks can be installed, volunteer host pads can be built to reduce vandalism and the threat of wildfire, and we can have trails for equestrian use or biking – instead of just hiking; and finally we can establish temporary roads/trails, if necessary, for fire suppression or timber harvesting.

This law does work in that it controls how the sites are managed. That said, some parks need to be removed from the law, one park added, and the law changed to help serve the people we work for and with.